

APPROVED

TOWN OF WESTFORD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

JOINT MEETING WITH

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AND

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

DATE: Monday, March 15, 2004

TIME: 7:10 P.M.

PLACE: Millennium School Conference Room

PRESENT: Christopher Romeo, Robert Jefferies, Dini Healy-Coffin,
Allan Loiselle, James Silva

OTHERS

PRESENT: Steve Ledoux-Town Manager; Norman Khumalo-Assistant
Town Manager; Suzanne Marchand-Finance Director;
Finance Committee Members: Judy Culver, Charlie Rusman,
Harvey Greenberg, James Sullivan, Kelly Ross;
Members of the School Committee: Margaret Murray, Sharon
Boonstra, Don Siraini, Mike Mulligan, Karen Mario-Young;
Betsy Andrews; Steve Foster-School Superintendent, Bill
Olsson, Asst. School Superintendent; Audience Members

Executive Session

The Board voted to go into Executive Session at 7:12 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the Tresca litigation. A polling of the Board: Romeo-yes; Healy-Coffin-yes; Jefferies-yes; Loiselles-yes; Silva-yes. Ledoux, Khumalo, Marchand, Gary Brackett-Town Counsel, and John Gannon-Town Counsel to also attend. The Board to reconvene to regular session at the end of Executive Session.

Reconvene to Regular Session

The Board reconvened to regular session at 7:45 p.m.

Discussion of Ongoing Budget Issues

This discussion was continued from the March 9, 2004 meeting. Healy-Coffin announced that the Board is not proposing an override but will use every reserve to provide \$1.4M to the School budget. Healy-Coffin pointed out that money was put into the reserve accounts when the town was in better financial shape and that the reserves are needed now.

Healy-Coffin and Marchand made a presentation of the Town of Westford Proposal to Balance the Budget. School Department Request \$1,400,000; Reduce town portion of capital plan \$300,000; Additional use of reserves below minimum* \$400,000; Use of all remaining School Choice/Foundation reserves \$342,000; Reduce School portion of capital plan \$129,000; Reduce health insurance for estimated reduction in School employees \$135,000; Increase School Choice by 5 students (for graduates) \$25,000; Total \$1,331,000; Variance \$69,000. *Current estimate of reserves (Free Cash and Stabilization) below minimum recommended FY2004 \$982,000.

James Sullivan, Finance Committee, reported that the Finance Committee voted 4 to 2 to not ask for an override this year. The Finance Committee will be meeting on Wednesday, March 17th to take a position on the Proposal to Balance the Budget.

Margaret Murray, Chairman of the School Committee, stated that with the \$1.4M the School Department will implement late bus fee increases; student parking fees at Westford Academy; and athletic fees. Murray asked that any additional funding from sources be part of their appropriation for next year.

Marchand presented the Estimated Override Tax Impact for FY05 through FY09.

Members of the School Committee voiced concerns regarding their reluctance to draw down the reserves. The School Committee was also concerned with the needs of the School Department to meet the growth of the Town. The Selectmen, School Committee and Finance Committee discussed the budget, reserve funds, Finance Committee reserve fund, Stabilization and Free Cash.

Adjournment

It was moved by Healy-Coffin, seconded by Jefferies, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

Steve Ledoux, Town Manager

Christopher Romeo, Chairman

Submitted by Beth Kinney, Recording Secretary